

GAZELLI ART HOUSE



© Derek Boshier, *K Pop: King of Mask Singers*, 2020



© Derek Boshier, *Icarus and Corporate Friends*, 2020

Derek Boshier *Icarus and K Pop*

Press Preview: 6th October 2pm – 4pm (BST)

Private View: 6th October 6pm – 8pm (BST)

Exhibition: 7th October – 14th November, 2021

British Pop-Art Pioneer Derek Boshier Revisits Greek Mythology at Gazelli Art House During Frieze Week. David Bowie and The Clash collaborator unveils two dozen new works in solo exhibition inspired by classical folktales and Korean pop music.

This Autumn, Mayfair's Gazelli Art House is pleased to present a solo exhibition of new works by British-born, Los Angeles-based artist Derek Boshier. Blending Greek mythology with South Korean mainstream entertainment, *Icarus and K Pop* features two series made of vibrant acrylic paintings on canvas as well as black and white drawings on paper. Continuing the artist's exploration into the function of images, the show orchestrates an unlikely conversation between consumerist imagery, cartoon-like motifs, and pencil renditions of 19th-century paintings including William Blake's *The Ghost of a Flea* and Eugène Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People*. The exhibition offers a critical and playful commentary on global contemporary culture which comes complete with a programme of talks and events to be announced closer to the opening date.

A contemporary of David Hockney, Allen Jones, and Pauline Boty, Boshier first came to prominence alongside Frank Bowling as part of their seminal two-person exhibition *Image in Revolt* held at London's Grabowski Gallery in 1962. Completed during his final year at the Royal College of Art, Boshier's high-contrast gouaches made an impression with their youthful palette and witty use of American consumerist signifiers, from striped toothpaste to floating Pepsi logos. The same year, Boshier appeared in Ken Russell's BBC

GAZELLI ART HOUSE

documentary *Pop Goes the Easel*, propelling him to the forefront of British Pop Art. In addition to The Clash's second song book – released alongside the 1979 album *Give 'Em Enough Rope* – Boshier went on to design David Bowie's album covers for *Lodger* in 1979 and *Let's Dance* in 1983. The pair remained good friends and Bowie became a recurring figure in the visual artist's oeuvre, which the rock icon once described as 'utterly real and convincing.' Over five decades, Boshier's practice has spanned painting, drawing, graphic design, film, and collage, nurturing a complex and prescient visual critique of contemporary culture. From the space race to corporate culture and the advent of digital technology, the 84-year-old artist has never ceased to deploy an innovative aesthetic language to address the concerns of our times.

This is evident in his upcoming monograph *Icarus and K Pop*, composed of two series which derive from ancient mythology and Korean popular music. Inspired by the Greek myth, the series *Icarus* features six azure-dominated paintings made this year and last, depicting a variety of figures and objects tumbling out of the sky, from a suited rabbit to fist-fighting men and video game controllers. Together, they paint a modernised version of the classical folktale which narrates Icarus' fatal fall into the Icarian Sea after his wings melted from flying too close to the sun, despite his father Daedalus' warning. It is 'a story of ambition and failure,' observes Boshier. For the artist, the falling figure – a motif which has previously appeared in his works – represents the demise of prominent society members and power structures, from military to corporate and political. Nodding to Pieter Bruegel the Elder's *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus*, a pair of legs is seen wagging out of the water in the corner of each painting – like 'a splash unnoticed,' as W.H. Auden described it in his 1938 poem 'Musée des Beaux Arts.'

Meanwhile, the second series *K Pop* features five paintings also made this year and last. Inspired by South Korean singing television contest *King of Mask Singer* – whose masked participants' identities are only revealed when eliminated – they depict cartoon-like figures punctuated by Kellogg's visual branding against the backdrop of monochromatic blocks of primary colour. Playing with the letter 'K' as a signifier for both Korean pop music and American consumerism, the paintings nod to the TV show's increasingly popular global franchise, highlighting aspects of cultural appropriation and universalist aspirations. For Boshier, these inherent elements of deception, mystery, and audience participation mirror the political landscape of the post-Trump era.

Derek Boshier says: 'In my work over the years, I have had an interest in opposites, from gender to politics and culture. The title of the exhibition *Icarus and K Pop* is functional in that it refers to two separate series. The myth of Icarus is a story of ambition and failure. These elements inform the series and are juxtaposed with modern myths. Meanwhile the second series, *K Pop*, is informed by elements of cultural divide, difference, and engagement. Change is basic to life along with opposites, and opposites within change are equally interesting. A colour theorist will tell you that there is no such colour as blue or red, that as soon as you put another colour next to it, it changes. The same is true of images: advertisers know this well.'

For further information on *Icarus and K Pop*, please contact:
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GAZELLI ART HOUSE

About

Founded in 2010 by Mila Askarova, Gazelli Art House brings a fresh perspective to Mayfair. The gallery champions artists from across the globe with a focus on those at the height of their practice, presenting and contextualising their work to new audiences.

With galleries in London and Baku, Gazelli Art House has a specialist focus in promoting art from Azerbaijan and neighbouring countries to further a greater understanding of the rich linguistic, religious, and historic ties that connect the region.

Since 2015, the gallery has expanded to support artists working in the realm of digital art through its online platform Gazell.io. In 2020, it established the Gazell.io Project Space and VR library, the first permanent home dedicated to digital art in Mayfair.